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PRESS RELEASE

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Maryland Man Pleads Guilty to Federal Charge in Armed Assault Against U.S. Capitol Police Officers - Defendant Brandished Gun in Confrontation With Police -

WASHINGTON - John Wesley Wheeler, Jr., 30, of Suitland, Maryland, pled guilty today to a federal charge stemming from an armed confrontation that took place in September 2010 with U.S. Capitol Police officers.

Wheeler appeared this afternoon before the Honorable Judge Richard W. Roberts in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. He pled guilty to one count of assaulting, resisting, or impeding certain officers or employees. He faces a statutory maximum sentence of 20 years in prison. Sentencing was scheduled for May 19, 2011.

The guilty plea was announced by U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr., Phillip D. Morse, Sr., Chief of the U.S. Capitol Police, and Cathy L. Lanier, Chief of the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD).

According to the Statement of Offense and plea agreement filed with the Court by the government, on September 17, 2010, at approximately 4:55 a.m., Capitol Police Officer Derrick Conrad was on duty and in full uniform while sitting in a marked police car at a stationary post in the 100 block of Independence Avenue SW. Officer Conrad saw an individual, later identified as Wheeler, across the street. The defendant paced back and forth for a short period of time, left, and returned within minutes to that same location.

Very soon after returning, Wheeler charged from across the street directly at Officer Conrad and pointed a loaded firearm at him. Officer Conrad, fearing for his life and with little time to react, drove his marked car quickly up the street to safety and used his police radio to give a description of the defendant.

The government's proof would establish that in preparation to fire his weapon, Wheeler "racked" a round into the chamber of his semi-automatic weapon – as conclusively demonstrated

by a nine-millimeter cartridge that was recovered near the intersection where he pointed the gun at Officer Conrad.

Within approximately four minutes, other Capitol Police Officers saw Wheeler, who matched the suspect's description provided by Officer Conrad, in the area of Second and C Streets SW. They used a spotlight from a marked police car to shine on him. In addition, the police officers shouted commands instructing Wheeler to show his hands.

Instead, Wheeler pulled out a firearm and pointed it toward two uniformed Capitol Police officers. The police officers shouted additional commands at the defendant to drop his weapon and get on the ground, but he did not comply. The two officers then utilized their agency-issued firearms and fired at the defendant, hitting him multiple times. Wheeler fell to the ground and dropped his firearm nearby. Police officers recovered a nine-millimeter handgun, on the ground, within arm's reach of Wheeler. It was loaded with ammunition.

In announcing the guilty plea, U.S. Attorney Machen, U.S. Capitol Police Chief Morse, and MPD Chief Lanier commended the outstanding investigative work of Special Agent Dennis Holland and Supervisory Special Agent Jay Scheelar, the lead agents from the Capitol Police.

They also commended the work of MPD Mobile Crime Technicians Dwayne Mitchell, Thomas Coughlin, James Savage, Grant Greenwalt, Brenda Floyd, and Natasha Pettus. They acknowledged the efforts of Legal Assistants Latoya Wade and Priscilla Hutson, Paralegal Teesha Tobias, and Supervisory Paralegal Kim Hall, of the U.S. Attorney's Office. Finally, they praised the work of Assistant U.S. Attorney Karla-Dee Clark, who investigated and prosecuted the case.

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